(72)

22 August 1915

The Grange
Botham
Chichester Sunday

My Billy.

I am writing to you according to promise but I must expect my letters from this place to be anything but dull & niggly & domestic little affairs. If you walked down the main street at Botham & stopped at a gate & walked over a small rustic bridge which crosses a little stream you would find yourself in the garden of The Grange. all neat & clean shaven & enclosed. all the very opposite from Asheham & all belonging to that sphere of life where servants really do their work under the mistresses eye. The garden is on the road so all that goes on in it must be irreproachably respectable - no posing naked as at Asheham. Inside the house the walls are drab & grey the paint pure white the furniture simple & cranky. The pictures sham Aubrey Beardsley A few works by me & Duncan have now been stuck over them in places in the hope of introducing a little colour. Its incredible how these people dread colour much more than our ancestors did even with

their red & peacock blue plush. However one room meant for the night nursery I have turned into my bed room & studio & it has a large window & balcony so at least one gets some light. If you go beyond the village as a matter of fact the country isn't so bad. sometimes it's very beautiful. as the wide estuary comes up to the village. One gets boats here & can go sailing on it. Being an estuary only it can't get very rough & even I am taken sailing. Today we are going to sail up to Eleanor which is at the other end of the estuary for lunch. & we often take our tea & the children to a little place called Itchener about 2 miles off & have a picnic. I wish you could come & do it with us. You would like having picnics with the brats wouldn't you?

Rupert is staying here now & Gerald. Bridges was to have come but was too much exhausted. I think they'll both break down if they don't marry soon. but they mean to do so about Sep. 10th which may just save them. I am disappointed at not having her here as I wanted to find out more

what she's like. They mean to live in the depths of the country & asked me if I knew of any house in the Askeham region. I kept quiet about Muggery Pottle. Thinking at any rate I'd try & see it first. Duncan hasn't been able to go & see it from Adrian's house as it's 8 miles off & he'd have had to walk both ways. But I daresay I shall be able to go & see it some day. I think I might at any rate put up a studio there & perhaps later make it into my country seat.

This place swarms with painters & Roger & I now join their ranks & set out with our easels in the morning. Unless he's here I'm generally too lazy to go & the painters hunting grounds & paint at home. His energy is still amazing & meanwhile he has visited the church & been fishing & all sorts of things before me gets up. I had a letter from your old friend Snow yesterday. She wants to come to London in October & paint with me for a fortnight so perhaps you'll see her. All her relations of course have enlisted from a sense of duty & she is getting up garden

parties etc for war charities. I see more & more that we are completely isolated from our kind Perhaps its a bad thing It would be much pleasanter if one ever felt what they do but one does so less & less

I shall have to come up to London again in about a fortnight or perhaps I shall see you then. Meanwhile do write if my letters arent too impossibly dull. Still I know a dull letter is better than none at all when one is in bed. Though at this moment you see far more people than I do & no doubt hear all the gossip. I wonder if you have seen old Jumbo. I expect I shall be alone here at the end of the week as Clive is going to stay with Oliver & with Lytton. & then perhaps I shall be driven to be more sympathetic with my kind & pick up with some of the painters

Yours

V. B

T. PARSONS 3.2.73

(73)

31 Aug 1915

The Grange
Bosham

Tuesday

My Billy.
I see that the life you are leading now is a gay one compared to mine. I have been alone here with the children since last Saturday & I find it difficult to believe that my letters can be anything but dull. All the same you see your compliments are so skilful that you induce a letter from me - not that I really believe them but I know how insatiable your appetite for letters is. I suppose that besides seeing all the world & beauty & intellect now you also get letters from all the wits of our time - but still you haven't enough. Just because I don't happen to be in to my post is barren & no one ever writes me - & not you sorry for me? Well I don't mind & I shall draw any pity from you. I have been trying to find out how I would like to live in the country & I've almost a good deal from these few days of solitude. Of course my country

estate would be much nicer than this & I should have a large studio to work in - on the other hand I should have much more solitude & it would often be winter. I don't think I should mind being alone a good deal. I always have so many jobs in hand that I never have enough time to get them done in - & I should certainly be able to work in quite a different way from what one can when one is always being interrupted. Then I see a good deal of the children in a very nice & easy way - Quentin is getting more & more charming. I suppose he is bound to get less & less so soon - unluckily. But he will be a most interesting creature even when he's less of a buffoon. On the whole I have come to the conclusion that a background of country with easy access to London would really be very nice

Tomorrow or the day after Duncan is coming so my solitude is nearly at an end. & Clive returns on Friday. After that I believe Lytton comes for a week. But we shan't have many people here. nothing like what we did at Asheham. as the house isn't nearly so big or elastic.

You ask for sketches which I would send if I had any ready. but at present I have

several begun & none finished - I wish you'd send me your copies of mine & Duncan's paintings - It's a great honour to have one's works copied & as you're the only person whos ever likely to copy mine I think I ought to see it. That was a horrid picture I had at the Stratton though & not worth your attention. Roger was rather upset at my lending you that abstraction as you know I had given it to him. He was sure I'd never get it back. but I said I could tear it from your wall at any moment & hang another instead. Roger's activities & energies amaze me more & more. One day he wanted to take us sailing. Both Clive & I were willing to go if we might talk on terra firma about it - we didn't like being hurried off after breakfast with more of the duties of the day accomplished later in the day & got into a great stew. Roger however, had to catch a train to Lewes It was like our travels in Italy again - he fuming & we procrastinating - At last he got us off after we had got our way to the extent of making him do several jobs in the village while we were slowly getting ready. Then we went down to the boat place - Lime

were to be had. It was a blazing hot day - so Clive & I settled down very happily to watch children catch crabs & bask in the sun. But Roger was undaunted, pushed about among the boat men & eventually not only got a boat but a very large & handsome one with great big sails & a centre-board (Do you know what that is?) I have always been given to understand that sailing is a difficult & dangerous art. But Roger of course has picked it up & never takes a man. Off we went at a terrific pace - I have never been so fast. In a few minutes we got to Itchenor & thought we would anchor while Roger had a bathe. This wasn't so easy as first we almost ran on the mud & then we couldn't make way against the wind. Roger took off his clothes however & at last got us anchored in safety. But happily decided in the end that he wouldn't bathe which would certainly have been a disastrous thing to do as he could never have climbed into our boat again & would probably have been swept away by a current. (This is a very long & dull story) So we had lunch & wanted to go home. Clive & I did that is. But Roger insisted upon going on - He hadn't yet had enough sailing. So on we went - shooting along faster than ever - almost out to the open sea - in spite of protests from Clive who said we should never get back. At last we turned & got back about ⅓ of the way - when the wind dropped - [illegible] the tide was against us - we talked & talked only to find ourselves getting further & further off. You can

imagine Clive's despair. It was just what he had foretold & we might as well anchor where we were & wait till midnight & the turn of the tide to get home. Then Roger's obstinacy triumphed. He would not give in but went on talking & tacking. until at last a slight wind sprung up & by great technical skill he sailed us home quite quickly. The whole expedition seemed to me typical of his determination to conquer men & tide & wind & come out in the end with technique triumphant. I have heard since from them that sailing a boat like that was really very dangerous knowing as little about it as he did. One may capsize in a minute - not that it would much have mattered then as we could all swim & the estuary is so shallow that one is generally well within ones depth. Still I should not let him take the children out in a big boat in spite of all his triumphs. If you want Helen's & Ive no doubt you could get them to lend you any amount as we did lots in France.

Yours
VB

1916

WISSETT LODGE,
HALESWORTH,
SUFFOLK.

May 10

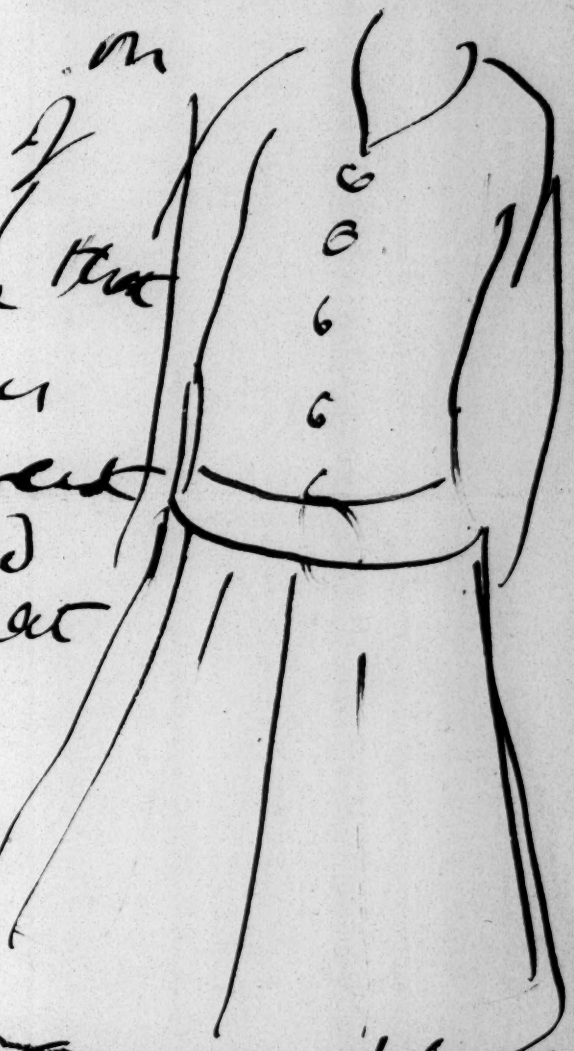
My Billy.

I'm afraid I have been a long time writing about your cloak but as no doubt you have heard we have had rather an agitating time with the tribunals as Hilton Duncan & Bunny were refused any exemption. The tribunal consisted of perfectly bovine country bumpkins whose skulls couldn't be penetrated at all. They would hardly listen

to anything & one felt at
once that it was quite
hopeless. Probably you
have heard all about it
from Adrian or someone
so I won't go over it all
again. Now we have
to wait for the appeal
but I haven't much hope
of that being any better

It is rather difficult
to design a coat as I
have no fashion plates
here. I imagine the
fashion now is to have

it rather straight down to a very low belt & then rather wide in those kind of lines but I just suppose that is what you want. Have you an old cloak that you could follow the general lines of? Perhaps that old white one with black lines? which was very



prete. I think it would be easier to do that than follow a vague sketch.

Thank you very much for sending the garden book. It has been very wet here the last few days but now its setting fine again & I am going to start doing all I can.

Barbara Hyles. One of the young short haired generation is staying here now & she is just becoming a gardener, work at odd jobs for a nursery gardener in Hampstead

WISSETT LODGE,
HALESWORTH,
SUFFOLK.

So she is useful here & can be turned on to weed etc. She is quite nice - not very interesting except as a specimen of the new school - very independent & cheerful. She left home & went to the Slade & has refused to return - She now rides a motor cycle & tried to get a job as chauffeur but having failed to do so is talking to gardening.

My plans are rather
vague until I know
what happens at the
appeal. What are you
doing? Are you back at
Hospital? Do write & tell
me all the gossip you
can. I suppose every-
one knows will soon be
either in prison or the
army. Will Leonard be
a C.O.? Please write
soon from yours VD

Summer 1916

WISSETT LODGE,
HALESWORTH,
SUFFOLK.

Sunday.

My Billy

I haven't answered your last letter but I enjoyed getting it all the same & I hope now I shall see you in a few days. I am coming to London on Tuesday for 2 or 3 days & will telephone to you when I come & arrange to see you. You have heard of course about the result of the

appeal Tribunal & how
they get leave to appeal
to the Central Tribunal.
Nothing has yet been
heard of that. So we
are still uncertain.
I must send this to
Halesworth by the servants
who are going to church
there. So goodbye. I
shall see you I hope
Wednesday or Thursday.
Yours
V B

(74)

25 June 1916

WISSETT LODGE,
HALESWORTH,
SUFFOLK.

Sunday

My Billy,
It's a long time since I had [illegible] from you & I have been waiting & waiting expecting every day to hear from the Central Tribunal when I thought our plans would be more settled. However there is no news yet & so I think we must pay them no attention but arrange life independently. Anyhow as it is now nearly the end of June I expect I shall stay on here whatever happens!

When could you & Leonard come here? Will you tell me what would suit you? I think any time will do for us. Lytton & Norton are both here & have been for about 10 days but both I think go tomorrow. No one else that I know of is coming. Do try to come soon.

Have you been seeing Aunt Mary or Minna or any of those relics lately? I had an amazing letter

from Aunt Annie from the Isle of Wight, all about Aunt Mary & the children & Richmond, etc. mixed up in an extraordinary confusion also a letter from Madge asking me to go & stay with her. which I haven't answered - nor her the letter either. But my dealings with the relics have set beyond letters. Yours are much more interesting. I hope you've got a lot of scraps to tell me. I have now made a room into a studio. as the term was

apt to be too cold or too windy. I do have a very nice room to myself in which you & I can sit & gossip when you come. I must say you'll be very comfortable but if its fine it is really very nice in the garden & if its not we can sit in my studio. I have several marbled papers to show you. Do you still want some? Have you settled about the press? If you could send me specimens of the right kind of paper for your book covers I could do you some samples

Yours ever

T. PARSONS 3.2.73